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HARAMBEE FLAME

March 1986

A Publication of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization

"The Color Purple": Just Another Log In The Fire

It has only been about five or six years ago since the height of controversy about BLACK MACHO AND THE MYTH OF THE SUPER-WOMAN by Michele Wallace and FOR COLORED GIRLS WHO HAVE CONSIDERED SUICIDE WHEN THE RAINBOW IS ENUF by Ntozake Shange. Here, we're talking about the copping of some serious 'tudes. African men in this country, and some Sisters as well, jumped into their cocktail bags and got to talking about "Here's mud in your eye," except they weren't offering toasts. The mud-slinging was in many cases vile as folks joined ranks to attack Wallace and Shange as "provocateurs," "tools of the white man," etc.

A few years passed in quiet and then along comes Alice Walker and her novel, THE COLOR PURPLE. What happens next? It comes out on the big screen. Rumblings are heard and felt, but pretty much, under-the-surface stuff; that is, until CBS hits the airwaves with "Crisis in Black America." But like THE COLOR PURPLE, the CBS documentary is just another log in the fire. The flames are burning high and our tempers, once again, are getting hot. A portion of our house is burning down. But this is not what bothers us. Rather, it is the fact that this blaze has been made public again that causes us this uncomfortable heat under the collar. Or at least this is the impression one gets from listening to and/or reading the many commentaries being made by various African spokespersons about THE COLOR PURPLE and "Crisis in Black America."

Are Steven Spielberg and Bill Moyers racist? Are they Caucasians born and reared in the U.S.? We might answer the first question with a third--Is fat meat greasy? And while

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Senator Supports Libyan Leader

(The following is a complete text of the remarks made by Brother Ernie Chambers to his colleagues in the Nebraska State Legislature on January 8th. We print this text both because the remarks are relavant and because you deserve to see what Ernie had to say **without** the "benefit" of his words being taken out of context--a typical ploy of "objective journalism.")

Mr. Chairman and members of the Legislature, even though on occasion there is a lighthearted way of discussing the issues here, I think the matters are serious and I believe Senator Beutler is acting with the highest of intent, but on this issue as others, some of us just view things differently. Now, when a person such as myself from the background I come from enter a legislative assembly, it is clear there is going to be a clash between me and my views and most of the other people and their views on serious issues. I belong, in this society, to what is **called** an under class. There are people in this Legislature and they represent people outside the Legislature who feel I should stay in that under class. Because our outlooks are so different and our goals in life are different because you are the have and I am the have not, you would probably view somebody like Colonel Khadafy as an evil man or a nut as your president has described him. I see him as a great man. I have the highest admiration for Colonel Khadafy. You see, I'm aware that before he

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...Log In The Fire

these two men may not be the kind of blatant racists as we might find underneath a Ku Klux Klan sheet, they certainly must be expected to, at the very least, have viewpoints that have been fashioned by the racist institutions which have "educated" and trained them and which, coincidentally or not, pay their salaries. With this in mind, we should not be shocked at the fact that Spielberg's film, "The Color Purple," and Moyers' CBS documentary do/did not show African people in very favorable light.

However, neither Alice Walker, Ntozake Shange, nor Michele Wallace are Caucasian. Nor are several other Sisters, and Brothers as well, who have been sending out their signals of alarm to us about problems we are expericncing relative to family, male/female relationships, African-against-African crime, and other trends and developments that are making, along with the simple fact of living in racist America, many of our lives stressful, if not altogether dangerous. And despite the wishful thinking on the parts of some of us that we are all living the life of Bill Cosby's television family, these alarms are not false.

Many of us are acting out the role of one who, having come to the realization that he is blind, closes his eyes in order to facilitate an illusion that he cannot see only because his eyes aren't open. Of course if the cause of one's inability to see is merely that his eyes are closed, then the remedy is simple. He need but open his eyes. But if the person is unable to see due to the fact that he is blind, then the remedy is much more complicated, if there is a remedy at all. Some of us are keeping our eyes closed because we either know or suspect that the problems we are encountering in the U.S. are not due to some reparable malfunction in the nation's political/economic system but are natural outgrowths of that system. We know that, if this is so, we will have to take steps that will challenge the system itself. And not only do we know such steps will require a great deal of commitment and work of us, we know that Malcolm and Martin were both murdered. Those of us who have lived through and/or studied enough history know that America can be brutal when it fears a significant number of people are opening their eyes. So we keep the lids shut tight.

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FLAME Editorial Policy

The HARAMBEE FLAME, the monthly publication of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization, is a Pan-Africanist newsletter. This means that the FLAME's priority, with respect to news and views, is African people and events and developments which affect us and are, or should be, of concern to us. The FLAME does not recognize any artificial distinctions among African people based upon place of birth. Therefore, references to African people are made on the basis of our common ancestry. An exception to this policy is the reprinting of articles, or excerpts thereof, from other publications, in which cases we do not alter the terms used to fit our editorial policy.

Articles contained in the FLAME do not necessarily reflect the views of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization unless they are accompanied by a statement identifying the views as being those of the Organization. Generally speaking, all unsigned articles are by the editor.

We encourage you to submit articles to the FLAME. Please enclose with your submission a stamped, self-addressed envelope. News articles, poetry, editorial pieces, etc. are welcomed. Send submissions to: HARAMBEE FLAME; Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization; P.O. Box 2500; Lincoln, NE; 68502-0500.

FLAME Editor - Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa
(aka David Rice)

H.A.C.O. MTG SCHEDULE

March	April	May
Sunday 2	Tuesday 8	Tuesday 6
Tuesday 11	Sunday 13	Sunday 11
Sunday 16	Tuesday 22	Tuesday 20
Tuesday 25	Sunday 27	Sunday 25
Sunday 30		

We earnestly encourage you to get involved with us. Our meetings run from 6-8 p.m. If you would like to make a presentation(lecture, demonstration, slide show, etc.) related to some aspect of African(on the African continent, in the U.S., or elsewhere) history or on some current development or event or if you simply wish to participate in our weekly educational programs, please notify us by mail or phone. We need to have your name and those of other guests you will be bringing at least a

...Log In The Fire

Those of us who know or suspect that we know how deep the roots of our problems go know that we are going to have to take some serious measures to counteract the programming job the commercial media, schools, and churches have done on the psyches of ourselves, our parents and our children. We know that we are going to have to begin getting radios and televisions turned off while, at the same time, making material sacrifices to establish our own communications media. We know that we are going to have to either secure control of schools in our communities or/and establish our own institutions so that we will have responsibility for the development of the minds of our young. We know that we are going to have to go into the "black church" and establish for ourselves a set of beliefs which does not teach us to see the Creator as a male Caucasian and to, consequently, view ourselves as inferior to Caucasians; a set of beliefs which does not teach us to accept hell on earth passively while awaiting a heaven after the last scoops of dirt have been thrown over us. We know that we are, in general, going to have to cease thinking and operating as colonial subjects who must ask others' permission before we do anything.

We keep our eyes closed while a portion(that large portion which contains our millions of poor, mentally and/or emotionally troubled, those who are lonely, et al) of our house is burning. With our eyes closed, some of us play "high society," others of us throw ourselves away to drugs and/or alcohol, run roughshod over our Sisters and Brothers to "get mine," front for Caucasian-controlled institutions to show that we are "responsible negroes," etc.

A portion of our house is burning down and many of us, instead of trying to rescue the large number of us who are trapped, are jumping up and down on the front lawn crying, "My God! My God! What will the white folks think?" But, you know, a house is a whole thing. If a portion of it is allowed to burn, the entire house will go up in smoke, regardless of who's watching.

-- Editor

H.A.C.O. MTG. SCHEDULE

week in advance. Write to: Harambee Afrikan Cultural Org.; Educ. Chrmn; P.O. Box 2500; Lincoln, NE; 68502-0500. Or call 471-3161, 380.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

UPFRONT is a Black women's newspaper published quarterly in Washington, D.C. We encourage the submission of unsolicited articles and artwork. Copy deadlines are May 1, August 1, November 1, and April 1. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want materials returned.

UPFRONT
P.O. Box 2293
Washington, D.C. 20013

THE BLACK SCHOLAR would be interested in receiving manuscripts for its May-June, 1986 issue which will be devoted to "Blacks and the Law." If you are interested in contributing an article on affirmative action, desegregation in schools, civil rights law and implementation, blacks and labor law, etc., you must send your essay no later than April 1, 1986.

THE BLACK SCHOLAR
P.O. Box 7106
San Francisco, CA 94120

AIM QUARTERLY is sponsoring an essay contest. Write an essay(3,000 words or less) that will convince earth's disinherited that there is a God. The three best will be awarded $100 each and published in AIM Magazine's 1986 Spring issue. The essays will be judged by an independent panel. Decision of judges is final.

AIM QUARTERLY
ESSAY CONTEST
P.O. Box 20554
Chicago, IL 60620

The Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization will be holding its annual banquet on Sunday, April 27 at the State Prison in Lincoln. More information is forthcoming. If you are interested in performing some form of creative self-expression or simply want to attend, please notify us soon. We want to see as many of you Sisters and Brothers here as the place will hold.

FROM OTHER SOURCES

Egyptian Political Independence In Question

"The limits of Egyptian political independence are firmly set by the $2.3 billion in U.S. aid it is slated to receive in 1986. Washington's aid to Egypt has been climbing toward this level for several years, totaling $7.3 billion since 1975. This hard currency income is absolutely vital to Egypt, especially since income from two other major foreign currency earners--oil exports and cash remittances from the 2 to 3 million Egyptians working abroad, mostly in Arab oil-producing countries--has declined since 1984...

"The state budget has been operating at a deficit of approximately $1 .3 billion annually since 1982-83 and the deficit is expected to grow for the next several years. This will make it increasingly difficult for Egypt to repay its $30 billion foreign debt, over $8 billion of which is owed directly to the U.S. government, Egypt's single-largest creditor.

"The International Monetary Fund(IMF) and the small army of U.S. Agency for International Development(AID) personnel who administer the U.S. aid program in Egypt have long advocated a simple solution to Egypt's economic problems: the dismantling of much of the public sector of the economy and the establishment of a fully capitalist market economy. One of the cornerstones of this program is the elimination of government subsidies on basic consumer items...The Egyptian government has regarded these subsidies as necessary because the vast majority of Egyptians simply cannot afford to pay world market prices for food, clothing, and shelter...

"The vast majority of U.S. and commercial investment in Egypt has not been directed into productive activity which would enhance Egypt's ability to develop a self-sufficient national economy...

"The opposition parties...have been hammering away since October on the theme that Egypt's economic dependency on the U.S. forces it to submit to repeated humiliations by Tel Aviv and Washington..."

--Excerpted from an article by Joel Beinin on p. 10 of THE GUARDIAN(2/5/86)

Moves Toward Cooperation in East Africa

"Six east African heads of state meeting in Djibouti last month initiated actions that may offer a respite to the war-torn Horn of Africa, where a persistent drought has further complicated decades of ethnic conflict and guerrilla wars.

"The leaders--Daniel arap Moi of Kenya, Siad Barre of Somalia, Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia, Abdel Rahman Siwar el Dahab of Sudan, (then-president)Tito Okello of Uganda, and Hassan Gouled Aptidon of Djibouti--met to launch the Inter-Governmental Authority for Drought and Development(IGADD). The grouping, with head offices in Djibouti, will coordinate member nations' efforts to combat the effects of desertification and drought in the sub-region, according to a final communique signed at the end of the conference.

"Many of the member states have not been the best of neighbors... This may change, following negotiations that began soon after the summit concluded."

--Excerpted from an article on p. 10 of the 2/10/86 edition of AFRICA NEWS

Review of U.S. Involvement in Haiti

"In 1915, U.S. marines invaded and occupied Haiti for 19 years, making the country a defacto U.S. colony. US troops crushed a series of anti-colonial insurrections through bloody massacres. The marines left in 1934 but the U.S. has maintained its neo-colonial rule through a series of puppet regimes. In 1957, Francois Duvalier was placed in power, establishing a cruel dictatorship based on terror invlicted by his U.S. trained secret police, the Tonton Macoutes. In 1971, he passed on power to his son, Jean Claude...

"Haiti, a nation of six million people in the Caribbean, is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. The average annual per capita income is $150...Over 150 U.S. corporations have holdings in Haiti and it is completely dependent on trade with the U.S."

--Excerpted from a front-page article in the Feb. 1986 edition of LABOR'S CHAMPION

FROM OTHER SOURCES continued on next page.

Sisters Enter Rapping Scene

"Tequila Mockingbird...is one of the most visible of a growing number of women using street lyrics as a vehicle of expression...

"Most of the commercially hot rapping groups, such as the Fat Boys and Run-DMC, are male, and many rely on a taunting sexual braggadocio. 'Men tend to use words frivolously,' says Mockingbird. 'Much of the stuff men rap about puts women down.'

"...Among the best of the up-and-coming rappers is N'Dase Beede, a sophomore at New York's New Lincoln High who took her name from the Mandinka word for 'wise woman.' She explains, 'I tell the so-called fly guys that they have an attitude problem and that they aint getting nothing from us fly girls until the fellas change their wicked, wicked ways.'

"Mockingbird is busy telling political leaders to change their own wicked, wicked ways. Raps Tequila in 'Don't Botha Me': Bishop Tutu is too too slow/Don't Botha me with your shit no mo/Got a revolution, it's coming fast/And if you don't like it, you can kiss my ass."

--Excerpted from an article on p. 10 of the Feb.-March edition of MOTHER JONES

Judge Denies Prisoners' Application For Appeal

"Efforts by three Black revolutionaries jailed for the 1971 killings of two New York City policemen to have their case retried suffered a setback Jan. 15 when Appellate Division Judge Joseph Sullivan denied their application to appeal their 1975 convictions.

"Anthony 'Jalil' Bottom, Albert 'Nuh' Washington and Herman Bell, known as the New York 3, are former members of the Black Panther Party...

"The case for appeal is based on charges of judicial misconduct, perjury by the government's key witness and suppression of evidence favorable to the defense."

--Excerpted from p. 4 of the 2/5/86 edition of THE GUARDIAN

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Critical Look At U.S.

"There are ten million unemployed in our country; the national unemployment rate among our youth is 20%, among black and Hispanic youth it is 40-50%...farm bankruptcies are the highest since the other Great Depression of the 1930s. The tax burden on the poorest 20% of our population has increased 80% since 1981. The elderly are paying more out-of-pocket expenses for Medicare, more than when the program started.

"...We are the only industrialized country in the world other than South Africa that does not have national health insurance for its people, despite the fact that we spend $300 million a year for sick care and 35 million Americans do not have any health care insurance at all.

"...but in some of the biggest cities, the supply of rental housing that is affordable for the average working family is down to almost zero.

"Twenty-six million U.S. citizens are functionally illiterate. Small businesses are going bankrupt at a higher rate than at any time since 1941."

--Excerpted from an article by Jack O'Dell on p. 38 of the Jan.-Feb 1986 edition of THE BLACK SCHOLAR

Lotteries And The Poor

"In Connecticut, players with annual incomes below $5000 buy 5.3 per cent of the lottery tickets but earn only 1.3 per cent of the state's income. And Connecticut is not unusual. 'Nationwide,' ...'the poor bought lottery tickets at 2.8 times their income share' during one surveyed year.

"Evidence abounds that the poor spend more than they can afford on lotteries. The Federal Commission(on the Review of National Policy Toward Gambling) found, for example, that during the recession of the 1970s, Michigan not only had the country's highest unemployment rate but also its most lucrative lottery.

--Excerpted from an article by Francis J. Flaherty on p. 31 of the March 1986 edition of THE PROGRESSIVE

Senator...

came to power almost two decades ago as a very young man that there was poverty, ignorance and great suffering in Libya. When the oil revenues began to come in, Khadafy provided housing for the people, medical service, education and the only reason a bastion of racism such as America is opposed to Colonel Khadafy in Africa is because he is not a bootlicker for white people. The only reason the western European allies of America will not join them in saying make military attacks against Khadafy is because Khadafy missles and aircraft can reach targets in western Europe. So it's easy for a superannuated Ranboesque caricature in the last stages of senility to say from the safety of a barricaded White House, and barricaded because he fears the citizens of this country which he supposedly governs, it's easy for such a man as him to stand up and make all of the threats with the great swelling words about what he is going to do to Khadafy in Libya. But you saw how quickly the people who are rational in this world said, no way, Jose. Even Israel, which has caused America to do all kinds of stupid things against the interests of this country, told Ronald Reagan, if you're talking about military action against Libya, count us out. So there is a lot of posturing, but most of the people in this Legislature and in this country will endorse what Ronald Reagan has done with his stupid, ignorant, arrogant, racist self. That's the way I view him. Now, am I reflecting creditably on this Legislature, which is a white person's assembly dedicated to the interests of white people? Certainly not. And that is not my intention. My intention is to say those things for the people who ordinarily are not heard. It is not to be a good guy and say when you see Ernie Chambers, you see the Nebraska Legislature in all its glory. Colonel Khadafy is going to stay in power as long as he chooses. America thought they could get rid of Castro by having the CIA and others try to assassinate him, and do you know what Castro told the president of your country? You say my people hate me. You cannot drive through the streets of New York in a bullet proof Cadillac, but I can walk through any street in Cuba in a T-shirt. He didn't have to fear being killed by the people he rules nor need Colonel Khadafy. And those types of men and men such as myself are not going to disappear and if we should be struck down, others will rise and take our place because the very striking down of those types of men gives a lesson to others of what it takes to maintain your integrity, your self-respect and your dignity as a human being in a country or a section of the world dominated by racism. So when you look at these rules, it might mean one thing to you all, but it means something else entirely different to me. And I tell you that there is nobody in this Legislature who can make me do anything, but when it comes to stealing, cheating, lying, thieving and doing the things that will put you in jail or put you out of favor with the law or law-abiding people, nobody has to make me do these things. I have a law within myself that governs me. I think Senator Haberman said, if I heard him right, that my shirts are generally or usually clean. They are always clean. I believe in hygiene, h-y-g-i-e-n-e, or some variation on that word or that spelling. But, nevertheless, we should think seriously about these issues even if they can be discussed in a light-hearted manner. A law or a rule, when promulgated, should be aimed at an evil and it should be framed in such a way that, if carried out, it will eradicate or remedy that evil. As I said before, I'm not going to say whether you ought to adopt these things or not, but there is a portion of it that I have a direct interest in that I would advocate the adoption of.

The above statement by Brother Chambers was made during a debate on a bill that would give the members of the Nebraska Legislature a code of ethics. For those of you who do not live in Nebraska and are unfamiliar with Ernie, he is the only African member of the legislature. Throughout his years in that body, he has maintained his integrity and willingness to speak out publicly on issues. At a time when so many of "our" African politicians forsaking our interests for personal "advancement," or, as in the case of Wilson Goode, actually murdering our people, it is refreshing and encouraging that Brother Chambers continues to be strong.

--Editor

AFRICAN POETS IN NE. VOL. 2
$2 per copy
available from H.A.C.O.

POETRY

As The Line Moves

There are weapons
I am told in words
Sometimes lost
On back roads,
Cradled in ordinary
Gullies,
At other times
Hushed up
In carpeted plush rooms.

There is the poet's want,
Some confuse with
Privilege:
To polish boots
Or slit a throat
Or two,
To say nothing really,
To slice a peach,
Peel a pungent orange,
Bring the pulse
To thump.

And there's the old
Saying, "Any time
A woman will do."
Weak and unnecessary
As she is by the river,
And there's the old man
With the woman.
They fish sometimes.
And this old woman
Takes to gliding
Her fingers that dance
As the pulley on her line moves.

--Ella Robinson